



Meeting Minutes

**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION
LAKE OKEECHOBEE COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, May 31, 2006, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
John Boy Auditorium
1200 W.C. Owen Road, Clewiston, FL**

Attendees:

Michael DiTerlizzi
Paul Gray
David Lithgow
Barbara Miedema
Craig Tepper
Bevin Beaudet

Richard Earp
Kevin Henderson
Frank Marsocci
Barry Rosen
Ken Todd
Joan Davis

Beverly Grady
Roland Ottolini
MaryAnn Martin
Ray Scott
Judy Sanchez
Patrick Hayes

1. Welcome and Introductions – Malcolm “Bubba” Wade, Chair
Welcome to Clewiston. Agenda changes: delete Item 5, Update regulation 5

2. Member Issues – Chair Wade

Mary Ann Martin: I was very happy to escort the Lake Okeechobee members on the field trip yesterday. We started at the marina, viewed blue-green algae by the locks and ventured to the east wall. Turbidity was still high but we saw some tilapia beds, went to the Dynamite Hole. The tour was success. The west wall had the clearest water and vegetation. We saw apple snail eggs, and some custard apple trees survived the storms. This lake persevere. We had a fishing tournament with about 100 firemen from all over Florida. They were very happy they caught big fish up to 10 ponds and they all had a good time. We saw ospreys yesterday; we also saw a bald eagle. We hope to have all of the Lake Okeechobee members help us save the Lake. We encourage the Board to make field trips available all around the lake.

Susan Gray - We are seeing improvement. There is a slow decline of phosphorus levels. We are not seeing submerged aquatic vegetation coming back. The lake is at 12.7'. Near Lock 7 we are seeing some seed germination. We have done some simple chemical testing. We have sent out a scope of work regarding spot dredging to potential contractors. They have selected the contractor to do the biological treatment and we anticipate that within the next month we will do the solicitation for the dredging company. The dredging is standard, but we are concerned with the handling of the materials and their disposal. We are moving forward with deep well injection and the 10 ASR wells concurrently.

Kevin Henderson – The St Lucie estuary salinity and clarity has improved since the discharges stopped but the oyster beds are all dead. It will take several more years before the grass beds grow again.

Roland Ottolini – An update on the west coast: salinity level and clarity has improved but we are seeing a large drift of red algae bloom. Sea grasses are recovering.

Barbara Miedema – With permanently managing the lake at a much lower level, there are water shortage concerns. I encourage the District to keep their commitment to have all the tools available.

Paul Gray – Thank you for the tour. The pollution in the middle of the lake will take decades to clear. The marshes are coming back. We have asked the Corps to invite the public to the Project Delivery Team (PDT) meetings.

Bubba Wade – This issue came up at the Task Force meeting, we will see what we can do about it.

Barry Rosen – Thank you for the tour. The blue green algae was very visible and as it gets warmer we anticipate another tough season of algae growth.

David Lithgow – We need to address how spraying impacts water quality. I would like to see a future agenda item on dike vs. dam standards.

Bubba Wade – I don't have an update, we will have it as an upcoming agenda item

Paul Gray – We saw 23 bird species.

Rick Smith – We are starting a series of WRAC Issues Workshops on Lake Okeechobee Water Supply Policy, the first is on June 12 at the SFWMD B1 Auditorium 9:00 to 12:00.

Susan Gray – These meeting are to develop our tools about how to deal with the demands of water supply delivery as the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule changes.

Mary Ann Martin – We need to reconnect with the meetings regarding spraying.

Bubba Wade – Just let us know when we need to start talking about the spraying. After Wilma we stopped the meetings so we need to let Rick know if there is a need to readdress this meeting.

Rick Smith – The results of the spray meeting should be brought back to the committee.

Bubba Wade – Cal Neidrauer will discuss a new option: Compartmentalization of Lake Okeechobee.

Presentation regarding Compartmentalization of Lake Okeechobee, Cal Neidrauer.

Bubba Wade – The “compartmentalization” idea is out of the box. At the time of the study, environmentalists didn't think this was the way we wanted to go. This is a lake group and I thought we should put it on the table. I would like comments from the members.

Most members agreed to keep the alternative on the table. Compartmentalization looks like it is a worthwhile solution because it benefits the estuaries, water quality, littoral zone and water supply, but dredging seems to be the fastest way to improve the Lake's health. There were concerns regarding the designation of the dike as a dam, it is safer to keep it as a levee and find a fast solution. One of the biggest constraints might be not to move water but the quality of the water. Some members had reservations about compartmentalization of the lake, (is the information too old), and would like more information.

Bubba Wade - The consensus of this committee is to start the dredging or chemical treatment, to get a solution going. The compartmentalization of the lake should stay on the table, but it is not our number one solution.

3. Review draft options paper from April 26 meeting

It was agreed that the committee members would provide comments to staff before the June 28 meeting in Stuart. Comments will be compiled and brought up for discussion at the July 26 meeting in Belle Glade.

Lunch: 12:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

4. Lake Okeechobee "WSE" Water Level Regulation Schedule Study, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Questions and Answers

Q: Martin County asked that the Corps meet with them to discuss WSE Schedule revisions. Discussions on STA3/4, designed for lake water, there is a limited volume to be discharged south, all STAs south are above regulation schedule. Do any WSE Schedule Revision alternatives drop out because of the 17.25' trigger? Is integrity of the Hoover Dike the highest priority? What about minimum flows and levels for the lake? Series of questions and comments about impacts on water supply, the SFWMD work on a Supply Side Management Plan, the Corps modeling of the Supply Side Mgt. Plan targets. Can we attend PDT meetings? Are counties allowed to participate?

A: Yes – Alternatives 1a/S2 and 1b/S2. Alternative 1a/S2 was the only alternative beneficial to relieve high discharges to the estuaries. Until the dike is fixed, the Corps could lower the top of the schedule, thereby reducing lake levels. It can take months to move 1' of water out of the lake when inflows are continually pouring in more water. Evacuation orders will disrupt the lake communities.

Each "reach" has its own designs but the Corps could more rapidly complete repairs with more funding from Congress. Counties, SFWMD, and the State Div. of Emergency Management are

working on specific criteria and timing for issuance of evacuation orders. The Corps is receiving \$19 million this year for dike repair and \$39 million next year. It could take 20 years to complete at that level of funding. PDT meetings are not open to the public, only agency members, I will check. There are public meetings scheduled for August. Counties are allowed to participate in the PDT.

Public Comments

Lake water quality has been an issue for over 20 years. Spraying for aquatic plants is causing problems. Why keep spraying? The marshes help clean and filter the lake water. Removal of the phosphorous sediment should be a top priority for lake restoration.

Adjourn: 3:00 p.m.